

WRITTEN REPLY

To : Examiner of the Patent Office

1. Identification of the International Application
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5. Contents of Reply

5-1. In order to clearly distinguish the invention of the present application from the cited document, we have amended the claims as per the Written Amendment in the separate sheets. Accordingly, the invention of the present application is not considered easy based on the invention described in the cited document. A detailed description follows.

5-2. Claim 1 has been amended so as to define the feature of the invention of the present application more clearly.

The invention defined by the amended claim 1 is characterized in that "the linear portion is formed as a straight line between the lens holder and the viscoelastic member, the arm portion branches off from a part of the straight line of the linear portion, the arm portion has a T-shaped tip held by the viscoelastic member, and the linear portion has a bent portion formed in its end portion held by the viscoelastic member."

This amendment is based on FIGs. 1 to 3, FIG. 5 and page 9, lines 9 to 10 of the description as filed.

Since the tip of the arm portion held by the viscoelastic member is formed to have a T shape and the bent portion is formed in the end portion of the linear portion held by the viscoelastic member, the resonance of the support members occurring when the lens holder is driven by the driving system can be suppressed more effectively by the T-shaped tip and the bent portion that are held by the viscoelastic member.

Also, since the linear portion is formed as a straight line between the lens holder and the viscoelastic member and the arm portion branches off from the part of this straight line, the resonance of the support members can be reduced over the entire range from the fixing member to the lens holder.

5-3. FIG. 7 of JP 2000-132852 A (in the following, referred to as Document 1) neither teaches nor suggests the above-mentioned feature that the linear portion has a bent portion formed in its end portion held by the viscoelastic member. The only bent portion of the linear portion (an elastic supporting member 31) in FIG. 7 of Document 1 is a flexed portion 31k (see Document 1: FIG. 7 and paragraph [0023], lines 2 to 4 of the specification). This flexed portion 31k does not correspond to the "bent portion" of the amended claim 1. The reason is that this flexed portion 31k is formed at the center of the linear portion (the elastic supporting member 31) (see Document 1: FIG. 7), whereas the "bent portion" defined by the amended claim 1 is formed in an end portion of the linear portion. As described above, FIG. 7 of Document 1 fails to teach the "bent portion formed in its end portion held by the viscoelastic member" defined by the amended claim 1.

FIG. 10 of Document 1 neither teaches nor suggests the "bent portion formed in its end portion held by the viscoelastic member" defined by the amended claim 1. This is because no bent portion is formed in an elastic supporting member 3 in FIG. 10 of Document 1 (see Document 1: FIG. 10 and paragraph [0008], lines 3 to 4 of the specification).

5-4. Further, FIG. 7 of Document 1 neither teaches nor suggests the above-mentioned feature that "the linear portion is formed as a straight line between the lens holder and the viscoelastic member and the arm portion branches off from a part of the straight line of the linear portion." The reason follows. The linear portion (the elastic supporting member 31) of the support member taught by FIG. 7 of Document 1 has a flexed portion 31k (see Document 1: FIG. 7 and paragraph [0023], lines 2 to 4 of the specification),

and the arm portion (a branching portion 31B) branches off from the flexed portion 31k (see Document 1: paragraph [0023], lines 5 to 6 of the specification). In contrast, in the amended claim 1, the linear portion of the support member is formed as a straight line and the arm portion branches off from the part of the straight line of the linear portion.

In the configuration shown in FIG. 7 of Document 1, since the arm portion (the branching portion 31B) is formed from the flexed portion 31k formed in the elastic supporting member 31 toward the viscoelastic member (a damping member 91) (see Document 1: paragraph [0023], lines 5 to 6 of the specification), it is possible to suppress the resonance of the elastic supporting member 31 from the viscoelastic member (the damping member 91) to the flexed portion 31k but not possible to suppress the resonance thereof from the flexed portion 31k to the lens holder 4. Thus, the configuration shown in FIG. 7 of Document 1 cannot achieve the effect of the invention defined by the amended claim 1 that the resonance of the support members can be reduced over the entire range from the fixing member to the lens holder.

Moreover, in the invention of the present application, the arm portion branches off from the part of the straight line of the linear portion, thus reducing the resonance of the support members more effectively than the configuration in FIG. 7 of Document 1 in which the arm portion (the branching portion 31B) branches off from the flexed portion 31k.

5-5. As described above, both of FIG. 7 of Document 1 and FIG. 10 of Document 1 do not teach or suggest the feature of the invention defined by the amended claim 1. Consequently, the amended claim 1 should be considered to have novelty and inventive step.

5-6. Claims 2 and 10 have been canceled.